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## ECCE! CAESAR VIVIT!

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In the October (1917) issue of *World's Work* is an interesting article "France, Battleground of Civilization" in which the writer makes extended reference of four pages to Caesar's *Gallic War*, comparing it with the present crisis. We hope that the following quotations may inspire every Latin teacher to beg, borrow, or buy a copy of the magazine, and read the comparison to the Caesar classes or, better yet, to the entire high school.

There is probably no production of the ancient world that has such an emphatic modern ring as Caesar's description of his Gallic wars. Most of us remember Julius Caesar as a gentleman who spent the larger part of his existence composing Latin histories that have since vexed the lives of millions of schoolboys. Yet no work deserves more careful reading at this present hour. The very first page of the *Gallic Wars* might almost have been written by a correspondent in the present war. The first people Caesar mentions are the Belgians; of all the Gallic races, he says, "the Belgians are the bravest," and he attributes these qualities largely to the fact that they "live next to the Germans with whom they are constantly waging war."

The very names scattered over Caesar's first pages bring up a thousand memories of the present war. His third sentence refers to the "Matrona River," which is merely the Latin form of the Marne. Then there is the Sequana, which is of course the Seine, the Axona or the Aisne, the Sabis or the Sambre, while the Latin names of the Gallic tribes are practically all preserved in the names of modern French cities or towns. Thus the Parisii naturally suggests Paris, the Suessiones, Soissons, the Remi, Rheims—and so on indefinitely.

Under the subtitle "The Germans of Caesar's Time," the writer continues:

Caesar's description of these ancient Frenchmen and Germans shows how innate is national character. In all the finer things of life, he says, the Gauls are greatly superior to their ancient antagonists. He finds them brave to recklessness, exceedingly impulsive, light-hearted, gay, "only too ready," he says, "for any adventure." It sounds strangely modern to find such phrases

as "Gallic refinement" applied by Caesar to these ancestors of the modern Frenchmen. On the other hand Caesar hardly ever mentions the Germans without showing his hatred and contempt. He describes them as a harsh, uncivilized, violent people, whose whole life is absorbed in war and whose relations with foreigners are marked by treachery and a disinclination to observe treaties and agreements. "Their business of life," writes Caesar "is summed up in hunting and the art of war, and their training in feats of hardship and endurance begins with earliest childhood." . . . Two thousand years ago the Germans manifested that same love of devastation which they have recently displayed in France. "To have a vast desert of unpopulated land," he says, "lying around their frontiers is to them an object of much complacency."

The writer discusses the campaign against Ariovistus and remarks,

Thus this first book of Caesar, which most American schoolboys find so tedious, really describes one of the great decisions of history. The events recorded settled the question whether France was to be a nation of Frenchmen or of Germans; whether the Gallic civilization was to give way to the more barbarous institutions of the Germans. . . . Judging from Caesar's description of this early German king, he had certain traits that suggest the present Kaiser. His most conspicuous qualities, as reported by the Aeduians and Sequanians, were "cruelty and insolence." He was boastful, arrogant, and and brutal in the best Germanic style, "a man of capricious and ungovernable temper."

Caesar was naturally inclined to come to the assistance of these Gallic tribes, which had been friendly to Rome for years, but he was really consulting the safety of the Roman state. . . . Apparently about the same motives impelled Caesar to go to the assistance of the Gauls in B.C. 58 that impelled England and later the United States to take similar action about two thousand years afterward—with the same instinct of self-preservation Caesar preferred to fight the Germans in Gaul rather than to fight them in Italy! . . . Caesar's policy at first somewhat resembled that of our own President Wilson. He wished to avoid war if that were humanly possible. So he resorted to negotiations.

Under the title "Ancient 'Scraps of Paper,'" the writer recounts Caesar's dealings with Ariovistus and the latter's treachery, also the later encounter with the Germans in 55 B.C. Under "Old Battlefields Used To-day," we note:

In other campaigns Caesar fought over precisely the same territory that forms the scene of the present conflict. In B.C. 57 Julius Caesar, entrenched along the heights of the Axona (Aisne), watched the camp fires of the enemy

Belgians stretched along a front of eight miles, precisely as the French have been watching the Germans for the last three years. Here at Bibracte—which is Berry-au-bac—was fought a great battle, in which the Romans were victorious. In 1862 excavations at this spot brought to light Caesar's ancient camp. The fleeing Belgians entrenched themselves at Noviodunum—which is the modern Soissons—but Caesar ousted them and continued the pursuit. Caesar finally came upon his fiercest enemies the Nervii at a place about three miles west of Maubeuge. That famous battle, the hardest Caesar ever fought, the one which, when the situation was going against the Roman legions, Caesar saved by snatching a shield from a common soldier and plunging himself headlong into the thick of the fight, was fought at this now familiar spot.